



North Country Regional Economic Development Council

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NORTH COUNTRY REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL HOLDS PUBLIC MEETING IN LAKE PLACID

The North Country Regional Economic Development Council (NCREDC) held a public meeting yesterday at the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA) Lake Placid Conference Center in Lake Placid, New York. Council co-chairs Garry Douglas, President of the North Country Chamber of Commerce, and Tony Collins, President of Clarkson University, invited the public, businesses, organizations, labor and education representatives from Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties to participate in the meeting.

A main topic of discussion was the U.S. Army's announcement that nationwide, it would be eliminating positions for 40,000 military personnel. The North Country was largely spared, as the U.S. Army chose to reduce Fort Drum's force by just 28.

Fort Drum is a major economic engine for the North Country, contributing nearly \$1.3 billion to the surrounding community in 2014. It is a base that has served the nation for more than a century and is the largest employment site in Upstate New York with 17,269 soldiers, 3,799 civilian workers and an estimated 2,600 retired veterans who continue to reside in the area. The NCREDC understands the importance of Fort Drum to the regional economy and has made several key efforts to secure its future, including:

- Securing a total of \$11.1 million in State funding, which is leveraging \$175 million in private investment, for the construction of 954 new housing units at Beaver Meadows, Preserve at Autumn Ridge, Creekwood Phase II and the Mercy Hospital redevelopment site currently underway;
- Supporting the ReEnergy Black River project, obtaining \$30 million for the priority project to retrofit the plant to provide secure, renewable electricity to the base now backed by a 20 year contract from the U.S. Defense Logistics Agency; and
- Working with New York State on the Army Compatible Use Buffer Program (ACUB) at Fort Drum, which will establish buffer areas around the base by acquiring easements on farms to prevent development outside the base that could impede training, such as helicopter landings, which require adequate space.

The Council also expressed its thanks to the men and women based at Fort Drum, who serve our country with distinction every day and who demonstrate to the Army the vitality and importance of this installation to our nation's defense and freedoms.

During the meeting, the Council also welcomed a new member: Bill Ferebee, Chair of the Essex County Legislature.

At last month's meeting, the Council also announced Dr. Cathy Dove, President of Paul Smith's College and Dr. Zvi Szafran, President of SUNY Canton as new members of the Council.

"We had excellent reports from our three Leadership Groups, showing solid progress in the development of updated strategies and concepts for the regional economy," said Garry Douglas, President of the North Country Chamber of Commerce and Co-Chair of the North Country Regional Economic Development Council. "And we welcomed the news regarding force levels at Fort Drum, with almost no force reduction under the round of cuts announced today. The future of Fort Drum as our region's largest single employment site has been a high priority for the council from day one, and we've been pleased to help secure major state investments in housing, energy and the expansion of buffer areas around the base, helping to strengthen an already strong facility in support of our men and women in uniform."

"The North Country continues to leverage the expertise of our communities and council members to embrace the regional economic development initiative launched by Governor Cuomo in 2011," said Tony Collins, president of Clarkson University and co-chair of the NCREDC. "Our REDC workgroups are making ground and we gave a warm welcome to Bill Ferebee, Chair of the Essex County Legislature as a new Council member today. We were also thrilled to learn the news from Fort Drum – our efforts are paying off and we look forward to the continued growth and sustainability of Fort Drum and the surrounding communities."

The Council also heard discussions on several statewide issues, including a presentation on START-UP NY from Empire State Development Executive Vice President Leslie Whatley, who discussed the achievements the program has made over the past year, as well as ongoing efforts to attract and grow companies in the North Country. Amy Greenstein, a program manager for Empire State Development's Business Mentor NY program, presented to the Council on how to leverage the use of technology to connect mentors and entrepreneurs both in the region and statewide. The program's first year was a hit, with more than 600 matches through the online program and Business Mentor events. To learn more visit: <http://businessmentor.ny.gov>.

The NCREDC, composed of Clinton, Essex, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence counties, is one of 10 regional councils across New York State that serve as a single point of contact for economic activity in the various regions. The NCREDC was awarded \$63.4 million supporting 69 projects in 2014. The Council was named a "Top Performer" in 2013 and 2012, in addition to its Strategic Plan being named a "Best Plan Awardee" in December 2011. There are 291 projects across the region that have been awarded a total of \$338.1 million in state support through the Regional Economic Development Council initiative and Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) process in the statewide competition.

About the Regional Economic Development Councils

The Regional Economic Development Council initiative (REDC) is a key component of Governor Andrew M. Cuomo's transformative approach to economic development. In 2011, Governor

Cuomo established 10 Regional Councils to develop long-term strategic plans for economic growth for their regions. The Councils are public-private partnerships made up of local experts and stakeholders from business, academia, local government, and non-governmental organizations. The Regional Councils have redefined the way New York invests in jobs and economic growth by putting in place a community-based, bottom up approach and establishing a competitive process for State resources. After four rounds of the REDC process, nearly \$3 billion has been awarded to more than 3,000 projects consistent with each region's Strategic Plan and are projected to result in the creation or retention of more than 150,000 jobs. For more information on the Regional Councils, visit www.regionalcouncils.ny.gov.

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